



## To Be An Overcomer

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I would like to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Revelation. The last chapters in the Bible are chapters that we should all take special time to study. Right at the end of the book God gives final and closing instructions. Some of the most important instructions and commands in the Bible are found in the last three or four chapters.

Here in **Revelation 21**, the first four verses gives a description of the new earth and the new heavens, where there is going to be no more death and no more pain and no more sorrow. Then we read the following in **verses 5-8**. It says, "**And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.**"

Here in these verses there are pointed out two categories of people. The first category are those that overcome. If you overcome, the Lord says, I am going to give you everything. You are going to inherit everything. You are not going to have to earn it, I am going to give it to you. These words are faithful and

true.

Well, what if I do not overcome? What if I am in the category that is listed in verse 8. Verse 8 lists the people that do not overcome. Now the King James says the fearful or the New King James says the cowardly. Those that do not trust in God. So they are fearful, they do not overcome. The unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the sorcerers, sexually immoral, idolaters and all the liars, - those who do not trust in God.

Now there will be people in heaven that have done all these things listed in verse 8. But while they were still alive in this world, a change happened. Christians call it conversion. They decided to turn their backs on their former way of life and they overcame their former bad habits. Can you think of anybody in the Bible that you know from inspired writings that is going to be saved who, for instance, committed murder?

Can you think of anybody? Moses, David, Paul; all of those people were murderers. Do you believe that they will be in the Kingdom? The reason why they can look forward to an eternal inheritance is because they repented of what they had done, they turned around and they overcame their evil ways. They were overcomers. So, if you know of someone in one of the categories listed in **verse 8**, there is still hope for them! They too can look forward to an inheritance if they are willing to change, if they are willing to overcome.

The more you read this passage of Scripture, the more important you see that overcoming is. It is not enough for me to come to church or to make a profession of religion. That is not enough.

The book of Revelation records over and over the necessity of overcoming. In **Revelation 3** we find the instruction. If you look in Revelation 2 and 3 you will find that to each of the seven churches the promise of salvation is given only to those that overcome.

To overcome is the same as to conquer. Look at **Revelation 3:21**. It says, "**To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.**" So when you think about this, you read what it says in Revelation 3. You read what it says in Revelation 21. You meditate on it. You think about it.

As we draw closer and closer to the end of the world it is critical to overcome. Now it has always been critical to overcome because if you do not overcome before you die or before the Lord comes, you are lost. That has always been the case. The problem is that there are always people that think that because of their age or some other reason, death is a long ways away. So they think, Well, I can enjoy the pleasures of sin for a while and then I can overcome later.

So, as we draw closer to the end of the world and the close of probation, it becomes absolutely critical, vital for everyone of us of every age to study carefully what the Bible say about overcoming!

It would be cruel to tell people, or preach to people the need for overcoming if we ourselves do not know how, would it not? How do you and I overcome? Overcome sin? Overcome our enemy, Satan?

Look again at **Revelation 3:21**. There is a very small word here that I would like you to look at. Actually it

is a much bigger word in the Greek language, but in the English language it only has two letters. This two-letter word contains the secret about how to overcome. **"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."**

What is that two-letter word? **As**. You do not have to always understand big words to understand the most profound concepts of the Bible. What does that word **AS** mean? Just like, or in the same way. That is what that word means. Now look at the text. If I am going to overcome, how am I going to do it? How? The same way Jesus did.

That is what Jesus is saying! Just like I overcame! So if I want to know how to overcome, might it be of great importance for me to study the life of Jesus to find out how He overcame? Let's take a few minutes this morning to study the life of Jesus and find out in His life an example of how to overcome.

As I have studied this subject, I have found out that it is a very big subject. I thought when I started studying it that I could just go right through the gospels and I could just summarize it but I realized it is indeed a very big subject! We certainly cannot cover all aspects of it just in this presentation alone. You need to be studying the life of Christ yourself to come to a complete understanding of this subject.

Well, let us go in the Bible back to the book of Matthew. Let us study a little context of one of the first great battles that Jesus had. As I have studied the life of Jesus in the gospels, I find that His life was a constant struggle, a conflict. Jesus said, "Follow Me." But we are so thankful today that He is the great overcomer! And we can also be thankful that Jesus says, "Follow Me!"

In **Matthew 4** there is recorded the temptation of Jesus in verses 1-10. This is the first great battle, if you will, in which Jesus, in human form, overcame the devil. Now remember that here we are not talking about a physical battle. We are talking about something much higher than that. We are talking about a spiritual battle. But I want you to see the context of this battle and see when it happened.

Before Jesus went into this battle, notice what happened in **Matthew Chapter 3**. Let us look especially at verses 13 to 17. It says, **"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15. And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. "**

Notice there, Jesus was baptized and at the end of verse 16 it says that the Holy Spirit came down and lighted upon Him. Notice, that before Jesus went to this first major battle, He was baptized and He had received the Holy Spirit. Is that significant? Are you having any battles with the devil? Or with sin? Or with the desires of your sinful nature? Are you having any battles? Have you lost any?

Now Jesus did not lose the battle in **Matthew 4**, but before He went into the battle, He was baptized (we will study that more in a moment), and He had received the Holy Spirit. In fact, if you read the first verse in **Chapter 4**, it was the Holy Spirit that led Him into the battle. If Jesus had to receive the Holy Spirit so that He could win the battle, do you suppose it is necessary for me to receive the Holy Spirit if I am going

to win the battle? Do you suppose that is necessary?

In fact, Peter told the people the day of Pentecost that was the reason you needed to be baptized so that you would receive the Holy Spirit. Look at what Peter said here in Acts 2. **Acts 2:38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."**

Peter promised them, If you repent and you are baptized, you are going to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was baptized by immersion and received the Holy Spirit before He went into His first major battle recorded in **Matthew 4**. Also take a look at **Matthew 3:6**. It says, "**And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.**"

Why were they confessing their sins? Because look at what John the Baptist told them in verse 2. He said, "**Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" So what is necessary in order to be baptized? Well, two things. Let us look up one more text and then summarize.

Look at **Mark 16**. These are the words of Jesus Himself. **Mark 16:16**. It says, "**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**" Belief or faith is necessary to be baptized. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

So there are two prerequisites to be baptized. One is to experience repentance. Two is to experience faith. Now faith, of course, involves study and teaching. Jesus said that when people were baptized, they were to be taught all that He had commanded. **Matthew 28:19, 20**. Repentance and faith.

And then when a person is baptized, he receives the Holy Spirit. I must have that experience if I am going to have victory and overcome in my life. Now let us just study for a few minutes and see why that is so. First of all, what is repentance anyway? Where did that come from? Repentance is a word that we use so often as Christians.

Do you know what it means? I was very interested when I first studied where the word repentance comes from in the Greek language, which is translated in the New Testament. The basic word means that you have changed your mind. That is what it means. You have changed your mind. Changed your mind about what? You changed your mind about sin. What is sin? **1 John 3:4** says that sin is what? It is the transgression of the law. It is lawlessness. And why do people sin and live a life of sin? Why do they do that? Because they want to.

There is something about it. In fact, the Bible talks about it. The Bible talks about the temporary pleasures of sin and people want those temporary pleasures. But when a person repents, they change their mind about that. The sin that they used to love, they do not love anymore. They turn away from it. They begin to hate it and they turn away from it. They are sorry that they used to do it.

That is not the only question to answer, that is the first part. The first part is what is repentance. The second part is how do you experience it? We cannot make ourselves repent! We have no power to do that. Oh, somebody may say, "I can change my mind if I want to." Try it. Just try it. Just decide in your mind, Well, I am not going to love sin anymore, and see what happens.

You will find out that you are powerless to change your mind and even more powerless to change your heart. The Bible is very clear that you and I cannot repent on our own. Repentance is a gift that we receive from God. However, there is something that we have to do to receive it.

Turn in your Bible to **Romans 2:4**. "**Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?**" What is it that leads people to repentance? It is the goodness of God. Now, notice how these people were led to repentance here in Acts the second chapter when Peter was preaching. There were three thousand souls that repented and believed and were baptized.

Notice what it was that led them to repentance in **Acts 2**. We will not read Peters entire sermon here, but we will just look at the punch line down in verses 36 and 37. "**Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?**"

What was it that cut right to the heart and the result was that three thousand people repented and were baptized? What was it? It was the story of the crucifixion of Christ. They had been there and many of those people had been involved in it because it had just happened a little over seven weeks before. What was it that brought repentance? Well, it was the study first of all of the life and especially the closing events in the life of Christ.

So, you cannot make yourself repent. You cannot make yourself repent but there is something you and I can do. Study the life of Christ and make a special study of the closing scenes of the life of Christ so that you understand what it means. You see, the cross is a story that most Christians even do not know what it means. It is just a story. They have never been cut to the heart, They have never realized that it was because of what you and I did that Jesus had to go to the cross.

Until we realize that, folks, we cannot understand the story of the cross. The story of the cross is not about what Jesus did for somebody else. It is the story of what He did for me. It is the story of what He did for you. Until you realize that and until that comes home and you are cut to the heart, you will not have the experience of repentance that you have to have because the study of the cross causes a person to stop loving sin because they see what sin eventually does. It turns them away from it.

They find out that sin is not pleasurable anymore. They find that it is hideous; that it is awful. It is something to be hated and fled from. It is not something to be enjoyed, because they see where it leads to, the ultimate end. Now everybody is going to find that out sometime. The Old Testament said concerning Jesus that He suffered the pains of hell for us. He suffered so that you will not have to suffer it.

But if you will not listen, you will pay the price for your own sins someday. Then you will find out that sin is not something that brings pleasure and enjoyment. The Bible says that the way of the transgressors is hard and that there is no peace to the wicked and that it brings destruction, misery and death. Read it for yourself in your Bible in Romans the third chapter.

It says destruction and misery are in their ways. Their throat is an open grave. The poison of vipers is

under their tongue. The way of peace they do not know. They run to shed blood. Sin is not something to be petted. Would you want to pet the head of a cobra? And when you study the life of Christ and especially the closing scenes, it will lead you to have a completely different view, a different mind set about sin. That is the first thing that has to happen if you are ever going to overcome sin.

You are not going to overcome sin while you are loving it and cherishing it, and clinging to it and saying, Oh, Lord, what shall I do? It is not going to happen. So the first principle if you want to be an overcomer is that you need to study the life of Christ, especially the closing scenes in the life of Christ and that will result in repentance. You will have a different mind set about sin. Until that happens there is going to be no victory in your life. You are not going to be able to overcome.

Do you know a friend or perhaps a family member who has said, *"I do not want to keep living the kind of life I am living, I want to turn away from it but I cannot get loose."* That is where faith comes in!

Turn in your Bible to **Mark 9** and we will start at **verse 22**. **"And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him."**

Here is the story of the man who came to Jesus and said, Lord, I am in misery and torment because of the condition of my son, but if you can do anything to help us, please help us. And Jesus said, That is not the problem whether or not I can help. The problem is whether or not you believe. All things are possible to him who believes!

Somebody says, *"I wish I could believe."* That is what this man said. He said, I am choosing to believe, help my unbelief. You can never perish if you say those words. Choose to believe in Him! Choose to put your trust in Him! Even if you are struggling with unbelief, if you choose to trust Him, you can never perish.

How are you going to have that kind of faith? Turn back to the book of **Matthew** and we will look at **Chapter 17**. This is the story where the disciples could not cast out the demon from the father's son. Notice what happened starting in **verse 19**. **"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20. And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."**

We are now at **Principle Number Two**. Principle Number One is that repentance comes from the study of the life of Christ and especially the closing scenes in the life of Christ. Principle Number Two is you are not going to be able to yank yourself loose from your sinful life style unless you have faith. Jesus said, That faith does not go out except by what? Prayer and fasting.

Daniel practised this. Look what Daniel said about it in **Daniel 9:3**. He says, **"And I set my face unto**

**the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:"** So Daniel talks about his prayer and fasting again in **Chapter 10**. Look at what it says in **Daniel 10:2, 3**. "**In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.**" He was fasting for three weeks.

Sometimes this is called Daniels Fast. All the things he could have eaten at other times, he refrained from those things. He was living in a most simple way. Why? Because he wanted to seek the Lord with a clear mind! Jesus said, This kind of faith, the kind of faith that will move the mountains of difficulty out of your life, does not happen without prayer and fasting.

Do you still want to be an overcomer? If you want to be an overcomer, in addition to studying the life of Christ and especially the closing scenes in His life, you need to become a person of prayer. Do you have stated times or places where to pray? In the sixteenth century there was a great reformation. We still read about it today in the history books. The world has never been the same since.

In fact, it will never be the same. Do you know what it was that brought about that great reformation in the sixteenth century? Men and women of prayer! Martin Luther was one of them. Martin Luther said one time that he got so busy that he spent three hours a day in prayer! But many Christians today spend only thirty seconds, sixty seconds, two minutes, three minutes a day, six minutes a day in prayer.

Then they say, "*I just cannot overcome.*" It is going to take some heart investment in prayer and fasting if you are going to have the faith that you need to overcome.

Or are you not battling any big battles in your life? Are all of your struggles and trials so small that you can just pray for a minute or two a day and then you can just sail right over it? Is it that easy for you? Certainly not!

**Principle Number Three.** Turn to **Matthew 4**. You see, this is a big subject when you start to study the life of Christ to find out what He taught us about how to overcome. You soon find out that it is a very big subject. Look in Matthew 4. This is the account of Jesus' great battle with the devil on the mount of temptation. Jesus here had three temptations.

How did Jesus answer the devil, when pressed upon with these temptations? He used the words of Scripture. Every time. You can read it there in **Matthew 4:1-10**. Every time Jesus answered the devil by saying, "**...Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**" **Matthew 4:4**

How did Jesus know that? There is no record that He had a Bible there. How did He know that it said that? We find the text that Jesus' refers to in **Deuteronomy 8:3** So how did He know that? He had memorized that verse. Jesus memorized Scripture and when the devil came to Him, He did not need to use His own words. He could answer the devil in the words of Scripture. That is **Principle number three**. Are you memorizing Scripture? Jesus beat the devil with the words of Scripture. He won the victory with the words of Scripture.

But if you do not know what the Scriptures say, if you have not memorized the promises, you have not

spent time in prayer and fasting, you have not been studying the life of Christ and especially the closing events in the life of Christ, so that in your mind you have turned away from the attractions of sin, it is impossible to overcome.

Let us go to another point. Turn to **Matthew 26**. Now this is the record of the last great battle while Jesus walked the earth, the first stage of the last great battle that Jesus had with the devil that started in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here we read in **Matthew 26:39** to start. I want you to notice what Jesus prayed on this occasion. There is something here that is vital to understand if we are going to overcome.

Look at **verse 39**. Jesus says, "**And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.**" That is the first time. The second time in **verse 42**. "**He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.**" And then the third time it says, in **verse 44**, "**And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.**" That is the same words that He said the second time.

What is the main thrust of these petitions that Jesus was making in the Garden of Gethsemane? He surrendered His will to the Father's will. Now it is very evident when you read it that He did not want to go through with the process. In His flesh he wanted to avoid it. But He said, Not My will, Your will. Have you surrendered your will to God's will? Are you doing it every day?

Are you saying, Lord, not my will, Your will? The surrender of the will to God is one of the hardest things for a human being to do. In fact it is the greatest battle ever fought. It is the battle that rages in the human heart. Am I going to surrender my will to God's will? I am going to say, Lord, I am willing for Your will to happen in my life and not my will.

The yielding of the will to God is one of the great reasons that there are so many Christians that suffer failure in the Christian life. They want to be in control of their own will. They are not willing to yield their will to God and say, Lord, whatever Your will is for me, I am surrendered to it. I am willing to follow it even if it is completely opposite of what I would think.

**John 14:15** says, "**If ye love me, keep my commandments.**" As you study His life and as you study especially the closing events in His life, you begin to realize that all of this was done, not just for the world out there, but it was done for you! Something happens inside! You begin to recognize what it all means and you begin to recognize how much He loves you! Only by love is love awakened. As you come to truly understand the love of God, you start receiving it. You receive more and more. You receive God's love and you begin to love Him.

The result of love is devotion and obedience. Obedience that is not the result of love really is not worth anything anyway. That is why Jesus said, If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Love is the great power in the Christian religion that results in obedience. Not only does a person forsake the way of sin, but also they are devoted to the Lord and they want to obey the Lord and they do obey the Lord. Why? Because they have to? No, because they love Him. That is also one of the great reasons that many people find and think that the Christian life is so hard, and overcoming is so hard, because this love for Jesus has never developed in their hearts.

So for them, the Christian life is just a bunch of rules and it is not fun. If you do not have the love of Jesus in your heart, it is not fun. It is just drudgery and you do not want to do it and eventually you will not do it.

The love of Jesus in the heart produces devotion and obedience. Unless that has happened in your life, you might try to obey the Lord and say, *“Well, I gotta obey the commandments so I will be saved.”* But all such works will fail.

Only by love is love awakened. When you spend time with Him and you find out what He is like, this Agape Love will penetrate your heart.

In fact, what was the cross all about? Do you understand what the cross was all about? Oh, somebody says, it was an instrument of suffering. Well, it was that all right but it was something more than that. The cross was an instrument of conflict. What was happening at the cross? The devil was trying to torture Jesus to force Him to sin. The Lord said to him in effect, *“You can do whatever you want to do to my body, but you cannot make Me sin.”*

You cannot make Me become impatient. You cannot make Me get angry. Who won? You see, the cross was not just an instrument of suffering, it was an instrument of conflict. If you want to be an overcomer, you must engage in the conflict and Christians that do not want to engage in the conflict will never be overcomers. You do not conquer without a conflict. It just does not happen!

That gives great significance to the statement of Jesus in **Matthew 10:38** that we read in our Scripture reading this morning where Jesus said, *“He that does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of Me.”* And what is the cross? It is not just a symbol of suffering; it is a symbol of conflict.

Are you willing to deny yourself and take up your cross? Jesus said to His disciples, Be of good courage, I have overcome the world. We serve the Creator of the universe that does not, will not, cannot lose battles!

There will be many in the Day of Judgment who did not overcome. But those who put their trust in Jesus and choose to follow Him will be victorious!

Do you want to be an overcomer? Your eternal destiny is at stake on whether or not you overcome. It is more critical now than it has ever been in the history of the world. Then you can, even if you are the weakest, you can; if you will follow the directions in Jesus life. Jesus said in **Matthew 10:37**, **“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”**

There are a lot of people that say, *“Well, I will pick up my cross and I will follow Jesus when my husband does, or when my wife does, or when somebody else does.”* All those people are going to be lost, by the way, if they do not change their minds. Jesus says, *“You have to make Me Number One in your life.”*

Do you want to do it? Do you want to make a commitment to the Lord and say, *“Lord, I want to follow You. I am willing to pick up my cross, I am willing to follow You and be an overcomer.”* If that is a commitment that you want to make, let us pray and make the commitment now. Let us not wait.

